

Chicago, IL **Near South Community Plan**



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In Memory of John C. Pettigrew

The Near South Community Plan is dedicated to John C. "Jack" Pettigrew (1937-2003), principal of Trkla, Pettigrew, Allen, and Payne, Inc. As the original author of the Near South Community Plan, Jack Pettigrew laid the foundation for the principles contained within this final document.

Jack Pettigrew dedicated his life to the creation of community plans, such as this Plan, and to the use of planning to improve the quality of life for those living and working within the communities. He worked for over 40 years in the public and private sectors of planning, leading large-scale planning and development projects in communities of all sizes, from large urban cities to small rural towns. Jack had a significant impact on these communities by providing them with both the roadmap and the tools to create and enhance great communities.

While Jack Pettigrew completed plans all across the country, he was deeply committed to Chicago and its communities as a professional planner as well as a life-long Chicago resident. He was particularly involved in Downtown, as a member of the Chicago Central Area Committee, president and board member of Friends of Downtown, and as a long-time resident of the Central District. Jack was a pioneer resident in the Dearborn Park II development and was committed professionally as well as personally to the growth, development and success of the Near South.

Jack Pettigrew's significant contribution to the success of the Near South Community Plan is also seen through the method by which he began the creation of the Plan. He worked closely with the community to understand their needs and desires, and to craft creative solutions to address their needs, and help them envision a brighter future.

Jack's long-lasting influence will be seen by future generations to come as the City of Chicago and the Near South community work together to implement the recommendations of the Near South Community Plan. Implementing the Plan will fulfill Jack's determined belief that good planning can improve people's lives.

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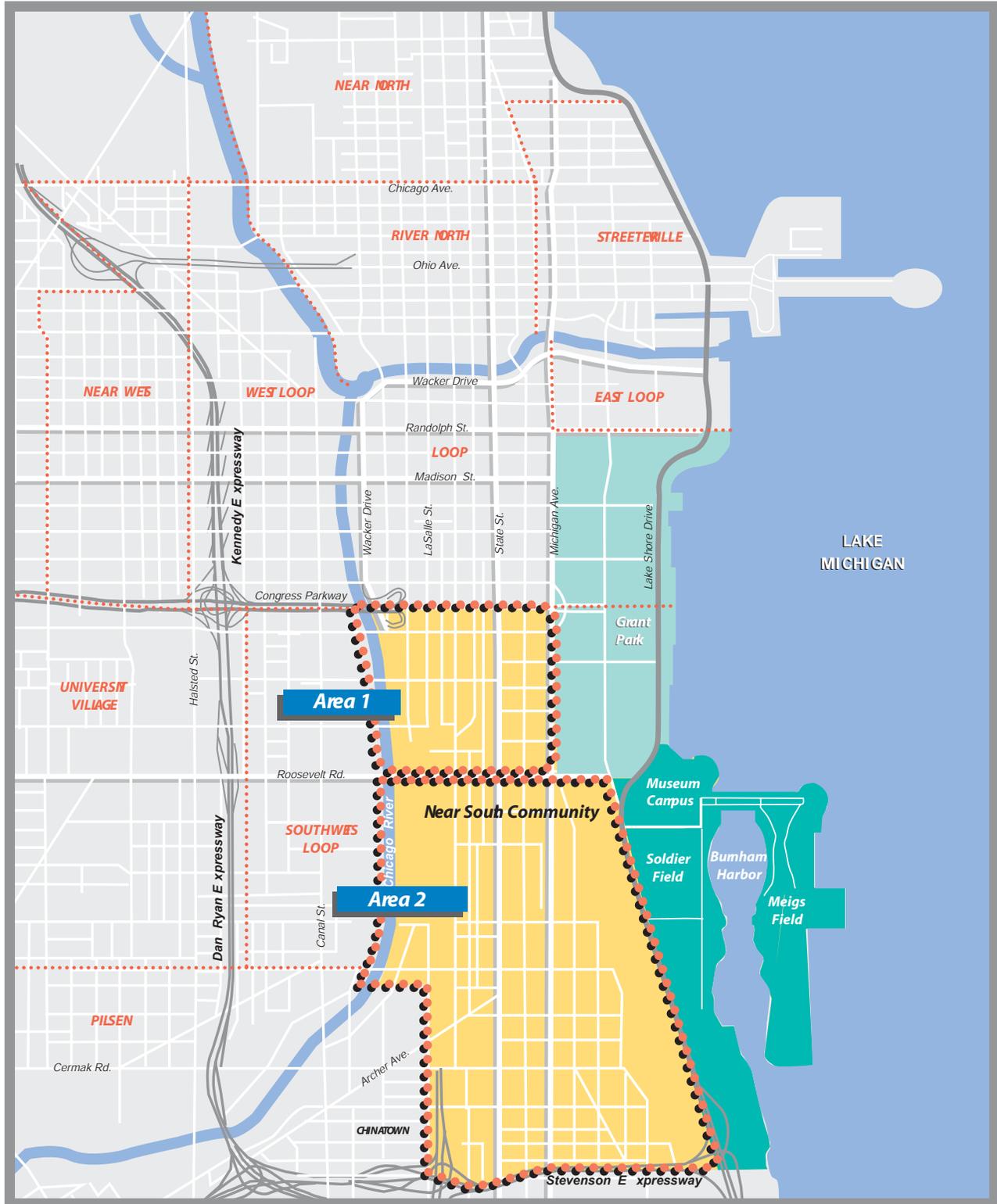
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The Near South Community





INTRODUCTION

Chicago's **Near South Community** encompasses the area bounded by Congress Parkway to the north, Lake Michigan to the east, the Stevenson Expressway (I-55) to the south, and the Chicago River and Wentworth Avenue to the west. At two square miles, it is roughly double the geographical size of Chicago's Loop.

The Near South is home to many of Chicago's outstanding attractions; including several famous museums; the nation's largest convention center; four miles of waterfront along Lake Michigan and the Chicago River; and four Chicago Landmark Districts: Printing House Row, Motor Row, Prairie Avenue, and Historic Michigan Boulevard.

The Near South Community, once a commercial/industrial area, is becoming increasingly residential in character. This change in character commenced when abandoned railroad properties were transformed into new residential communities, including Dearborn Park, River City, and Central Station.

The Near South has also seen the conversion of former industrial buildings to residential use, including many in Historic Printing House Row. In addition, large-scale public improvements have been undertaken in recent years, including the relocation of Lake Shore Drive in 1997 and the construction of the District 1 Police Headquarters in 1999.

The City of Chicago has prepared the **Near South Community Plan** to address the many land use, transportation and open space issues confronting this diverse and dynamic area. Following the Executive Summary, the document is divided into four sections:

- **Framework Plan** - Containing the future land use, transportation and open space plans;
- **Development District Plans** - indicating how the recommendations of the Framework Plan would be applied to smaller subareas or "districts" within the community;
- **Implementation Plan** - providing information on how specific recommendations of the plan may be implemented over the next 15 years; and
- **Appendix** - providing information on projects that were underway when the plan was completed, existing conditions, and information on larger, approved planned developments within the Near South Community.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Near South Community Plan** presents policies and guidelines for improvement and redevelopment of the area bounded by Congress Parkway on the north, Grant Park and Lake Shore Drive on the east, the Stevenson Expressway on the south, and the Chicago River on the west. Roosevelt Road divides the two study areas (Area 1 and Area 2) that make up the Near South Community.

The Plan strives to enhance the Near South Community as a mixed-use urban neighborhood that complements Chicago’s nearby commercial, office and institutional developments.

The Plan builds upon the existing qualities of the Near South: its proximity to the Loop; rich street life; mixed use character; residential orientation; pedestrian scale; historic character; and unique shops, services, and institutions.

The Plan recognizes the distinctive qualities of smaller sub-areas that compose the Near South Community with the Development District Plans and strives to link and interconnect these districts into a cohesive whole. The Plan grows from six guiding principles:

- A Diverse and Exciting Mix of Uses;
- Safe and Convenient Access and Circulation;
- Well Designed and Appropriately Located Parking Facilities;
- A Rich Variety of Open Spaces and Public Amenities;
- A Pedestrian-Friendly Neighborhood Environment; and
- An Attractive and Compatible Mix of Old and New Buildings



The Development Districts within Area 1 include:

1. Franklin Point District
2. Wells Street District
3. Clark Street District
4. River City District
5. LaSalle Park District
6. Dearborn Park I District
7. Printers Row District
8. State Street District
9. Wabash Avenue District
10. Michigan Avenue District



The Development Districts within Area 2 include:

1. River Corridor District
2. Dearborn Park II District
3. Dearborn South District
4. South State Street District
5. Wabash-Michigan District
6. Motor Row District
7. Central Station District
8. Prairie Avenue District
9. McCormick Place District

Executive Summary

(continued)

Guiding Principles

A Diverse and Exciting Mix of Uses:

The Near South Community should continue to be improved as a vibrant and diverse urban neighborhood serving residents, employees, students, and visitors alike. Various land uses and activities should support and complement one another, adding to the overall vitality of Near South Community. Recommendations include:

- The trend of an increasing residential population should be encouraged and promoted, with a range of housing types to support the community's diverse population. Residential uses should be located on the upper floors of buildings throughout the Near South Community. Residences are appropriate on all floors of many buildings in the southern and western portions of Area 1 and the eastern and western portions of Area 2.
- Retail, restaurant, entertainment and service uses should be located on the ground floors of buildings along primary shopping streets and pedestrian corridors, as described in the Land Use System and Pedestrian System recommendations for each Area.
- Additional ground floor retail and service uses that will meet the day-to-day needs of the growing residential and academic communities should be encouraged.
- New retail development should be compatible in scale and character with nearby existing development. Neither Area 1 nor Area 2 is an appropriate location for traditional "big box" or strip commercial site designs.
- Office uses should be located north of Polk Street, near the central business area in Area 1, and on the upper floors of buildings throughout the Near South Community.
- Hotel uses should be located in the northern and eastern portions of Area 1, particularly along and near Michigan Avenue, and in Area 2 near McCormick Place.

- Public, institutional, and educational uses should be permitted throughout the Near South Community. In particular, educational facilities should be encouraged in the northeastern portion of Area 1; along State Street, Wabash Avenue, and Michigan Avenue.

Safe and Convenient Access and Circulation:

The Near South Community should be served by a street system that provides safe and convenient access and circulation, enhances the neighborhood's land development pattern, and unites the Development Districts.

Recommendations that apply throughout the Near South Community include:

- Chicago's traditional grid pattern of streets and blocks should be extended into the LaSalle Park, River City, Franklin Point, and River Corridor Districts to enhance east-west circulation and improve connections between adjacent districts.
- Wells Street should be extended through Area 1 and Area 2 to create an important, continuous, north-south street, linking the various riverfront development districts. New east-west streets should be built to intersect with Wells Street.
- The Clark and Roosevelt intersection will be improved to facilitate through traffic movements on Clark Street and Roosevelt Road, improve turning movements, and provide better access to future developments in the immediate vicinity.
- Transit facilities and operations should be expanded throughout the Near South Community, as the area continues to gain residents. The proposed CTA Circle Line, following the route of the existing Red Line through Area 1 and Orange Line through Area 2, should be pursued.
- East-west connections need to be enhanced on existing streets and in the planning of new streets.

- North-south traffic should be distributed among Clark, State, Wabash, Michigan and the new Wells/Wentworth connection so no one road becomes a highway.

- The need for and feasibility of additional bridges over the Chicago River should be studied in more detail, in coordination with development west of the River. Possible bridge locations include Polk Street, Taylor Street, and 16th Street.

Recommendations that apply to Area 1 include:

- Polk Street should be upgraded as an east-west route through the heart of Area 1. Of special concern is the segment between Wells and Clark Streets, which is characterized by relatively narrow right-of-way, pavement, and sidewalk widths; an unattractive underpass at the Metra tracks; and a narrow, constrained intersection at Wells Street.
- Traffic operational improvements should be undertaken along Congress Parkway to improve traffic circulation and enhance pedestrian safety and convenience along this major "gateway" route.
- Traffic operations should also be improved at other locations, including the intersections of Harrison/State and Polk/8th Streets.

- Continue development of an "intermodal transit center" at LaSalle/Congress, including a CTA bus turnaround, to provide connections between Metra trains at the LaSalle Street Station and CTA buses.

- Consider the feasibility of extending Franklin Street south of Harrison.

Recommendations that apply to Area 2 include:

- As one of only two river crossings within Area 2, 18th Street should be upgraded and connected to the new Wells Street/Wentworth Avenue extension.

- Traffic operations at the intersection of Clark Street and Cermak Road should be improved.
- The operations and aesthetics of the underpasses at the Stevenson Expressway should be reviewed and upgraded.
- The possibility of additional connections to Lake Shore Drive should be explored.
- One or more new transit stations in Area 2 (particularly in its southern portion) should be developed.
- Continue to explore the development of a new CTA/Metra "intermodal transit center" north of Cermak on Wentworth, with a new entry from Archer Avenue, as part of the development of the CTA Circle Line.
- At least one new point of access for cars should be created west of Clark between Roosevelt and 16th.
- Clark Street should be changed to calm traffic and improve pedestrian crossings, particularly in light of new residential, educational, and park developments in the vicinity of Clark and 18th Streets.

Well Designed and Appropriately Located Parking Facilities:

The Near South Community should be served by attractively designed and appropriately located parking facilities that are compatible with the area's historical scale and pedestrian orientation. Recommendations include:

- The development of public transportation and pedestrian facilities should continue to reduce the need for off street parking in the South Loop neighborhood over time. South Loop's role as parking support for Central Loop should be reduced.
- On-street parking should be provided wherever possible for convenience of Near South visitors and pedestrian comfort.

- Surface parking lots should be well maintained and attractively edged with landscaping and decorative fencing. The development of new non-accessory surface parking lots should not be permitted.
- Signage should be provided to direct motorists to parking locations in and near Areas 1 and 2. Signs should be limited as to number and size.
- Attractively designed parking structures and underground parking should be promoted to serve new developments and to replace existing surface lots. Parking structures should reflect the architectural style and character of nearby existing buildings and conform to design requirements in the City's Standards for Parking Garages. Garages should have ground floor retail, restaurants, and other active uses. Upper floors of parking structures should be adequately screened with landscaping or decorative fencing/mesh.
- The developers of new buildings should be required to provide new on-site parking to serve their developments and, where appropriate, encouraged to provide replacement parking to serve the surrounding area.

A Rich Variety of Open Spaces and Public Amenities:

The Near South Community should be characterized by a planned and coordinated system of parks, plazas, open spaces, "gateways," and landscaped streets that serves the needs of local residents and employees, and helps organize and provide focus for the neighborhood. Recommendations include:

- The Chicago River corridor should be improved as a continuous greenway and public promenade serving pedestrians and bicyclists, with places for both recreation and relaxation. Overlooks and public access points should be provided at key locations that are accessible from the remainder of the Study Area.

- Grant Park should continue to be enhanced as a major amenity for the entire Near South Community in accordance with the recently completed Grant Park Framework Plan.
- Federal Park (at Federal and 24th Streets), Teachers Academy Open Space (at 24th and Dearborn Streets), expanded park space along the River north of 18th Street, and a new three-acre park within the LaSalle Park District are to be developed. Several open spaces will be created in the river corridor as part of the Franklin Point, River City, and Riverside Park developments.
- New accessible public open spaces should be provided as new development occurs, commensurate with the City's standard of at least two acres of public open space per 1,000 population. Parks should be created within a short walk of every Near South resident.
- Gateways to the Near South Community form the first impression of the area for visitors, and should be enhanced wherever possible. Gateways of particular importance are identified in the Framework Plan. Improvements could include landscaping, sculpture, lighting, signage, and architectural treatments.
- Planted medians should be provided along Michigan Avenue from Roosevelt Road to Cermak Road, and considered for Motor Row as part of streetscape work.
- A new field house north of the existing Ping Tom Park will provide Near South residents with new indoor recreational facilities.

Executive Summary (continued)

A Pedestrian-Friendly Neighborhood Environment:

Streets and walkways should be safe and convenient and should encourage pedestrian activity. Recommendations for the Near South Community include:

- Pedestrian connections along east-west streets should be significantly improved in order to better link development districts and provide more direct connections between the Chicago River, Grant Park, and the lakefront.
- Shops, restaurants, and similar uses should be encouraged on buildings' ground floors to provide an interesting pedestrian environment.
- Directional signs and kiosks should be installed to help pedestrians and bicyclists find the riverwalk, the lake, transit stations, and other amenities and attractions in the Near South Community.
- Wabash Avenue and State Street should be improved as pedestrian routes to the Loop and between Areas 1 and 2. Generous and comfortable sidewalks should be provided along State Street.
- Primary pedestrian routes should include Wells Street, State Street, and the riverwalk, and one or more routes within planned developments. New north-south pedestrian routes should be developed west of the Metra tracks.
- Polk Street should be enhanced as the primary east-west pedestrian route for Area 1, extending from State Street to the river. Harrison Street should also be improved for pedestrians.
- Eighteenth Street and Cermak Road should be upgraded as important east-west routes in Area 2.
- Additional pedestrian links to the lakefront should be provided to supplement the recently completed pedestrian bridge at 18th and Calumet.

- A new east-west pedestrian connection across Clark Street and the Metra tracks should be created near 15th Street.
- One or more east-west pedestrian/bicycle corridors should be established along 9th, or Taylor Streets, or along the St. Charles Air Line near 16th Street.
- The existing pedestrian under-passes at Polk, Harrison, and 18th Streets; Archer Avenue; and Cermak Road should be kept clean and attractive, and made more comfortable and convenient for pedestrians.
- Safe and convenient pedestrian crosswalks should be provided throughout Areas 1 and 2. In particular, pedestrian crossings should be improved along Congress Parkway and Cermak Road.

An Attractive and Compatible Mix of Old and New Buildings:

The Near South Community should be characterized by an attractive mix of old and new buildings that reflects and complements the neighborhood's established development pattern and building context. Recommendations include:

- New construction within historic districts, and adjacent to historic buildings, should be designed to relate to existing buildings and deal sensitively with the district's historic resources, in terms of scale, proportion, and materials.
- Buildings with architectural and historical interest, which help give the Near South a distinctive image and identity, should be preserved, protected, and enhanced.
- The City should continue to promote the renovation and adaptive reuse of older existing buildings. In particular, the ground floors of commercial buildings, which are highly visible to pedestrians and passing motorists, should be

improved and upgraded.

- The reuse and rehabilitation of underutilized upper floor space should be actively promoted, particularly in historic buildings and in those areas such as Wabash Avenue, Clark Street, and Motor Row that have a higher percentage of buildings with vacant upper floors.
- New developments should be based on Chicago's traditional grid pattern of regularly shaped blocks and parcels.
- New developments should relate to and connect with surrounding existing developments. Isolated enclaves and internally-oriented "development islands" should be avoided.
- To promote visual continuity and uninterrupted pedestrian and retail environments, buildings should generally be built out to the property line. Except in residential areas, street level setbacks should be discouraged.
- The heights of new buildings should reflect the predominant height of nearby existing buildings. The heights of new buildings should consider the scale and character of nearby districts, pedestrian ways, "gateways," views over rights-of-way and parks, and other pertinent features.
- Encourage environment-friendly construction and site planning in the rehabilitation of existing buildings or the construction of new developments with the Near South Community, particularly the use of green roofs, drought-tolerant planting areas, energy efficient building envelopes and on-site storm water management.

Implementation Plan

Three primary strategies underpin □ the Implementation Plan for the Near South Community: a) leadership and partnerships; b) zoning; and c) project financing.

Leadership and Partnerships:

- The City must assume the leadership role in implementing the Plan through public projects as well as financial and technical assistance to a variety of partners including other public agencies, local businesses, community organizations, property owners, and developers.
- In addition to City leadership, active support, participation, and implementation of Plan initiatives and projects are required by a variety of Plan partners including: the Park District, the Board of Education, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, schools, churches, institutions, businesses, community groups, residents, property owners, and developers.

Zoning:

- Zoning for the Near South should: a) help ensure that the intensity of new development is consistent with existing and proposed neighborhood scale and character; b) preclude the establishment of incompatible land uses; c) foster design and character recommendations; and d) help to conserve historic buildings and areas that are not protected by landmark status.
- The designation of new Planned Developments or the review of construction plans within existing Planned Developments should consider the use, design and improvement recommendations of the Plan. In some cases, existing Planned Developments should be amended to incorporate land use and design recommendations of the Plan.

Project Financing:

- Many of the projects and actions called for in the Near South Community Plan can be implemented through policy and administrative decisions and/or funded through existing municipal programs.
- The City has established five TIF districts within the planning area: the Near South TIF District, the River South TIF District, the Michigan and Cermak TIF District, the Calumet/Cermak TIF District, and the 24th and Michigan TIF District. Each of these districts provide potential funding sources for actions such as roadway and intersection improvements; streetscape improvements; construction of gateway design features; pedestrian crosswalk and underpass improvements; land assembly; riverwalk construction, neighborhood park and plaza facilities, and the rehabilitation of older, deteriorating buildings (especially those with architectural or historical significance). The Implementation section of this Plan provides details as to how each TIF district can be best utilized for improvements in the various Development Districts it overlaps.
- The City has various other programs that may benefit the Near South Community; these are described in the Implementation section. They may be tailored to the specific needs of the Near South area as opportunities arise.

